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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE APPLICATION OF ORNAMENT—VII.

BY LEWIS F. DAY.



FROM the practical conditions of work have arisen elements of design so distinctly decorative that they are sometimes taken to be inseparable from ornament and essential to it. Flatness of effect, symmetry of distribution, firmness of outline, and other such useful devices, have been adopted as articles of a rather too credulous faith. That is a proud condition to which they are by no means entitled. They are at the best working

rules, a sort of recipe, not without use, but useful mainly to those who are not much in need of such help.

Let us inquire into one of those superstitions—outline. It is of such use in ornament, and so often useful, that it has come to be accepted by certain theorists as a necessity of the case; with them it is the passport to "the decorative." Useful as an outline is in decoration, it is not, however, inevitable. Nor is it easy to say just where an outline should be used.

In very many cases the material and its workmanlike employment necessitate an outline. They may even determine its color, as in the case of the metal lines marking the cells in which the paste of enamel is laid. And it is curious to notice how, in *champlevé* enamel, where cells for the paste are dug out of the metal ground, the outlines are of varying thickness; whilst in *cloisonné* work the even section of the wire soldered on to form the cells, necessitates an absolutely even strength of line.

You have only to look at the quality of the outline to tell at once whether enamel is *champlevé* (a sort of niello in colors instead of black) or *cloisonné*. The evangelistic emblem on Fig.

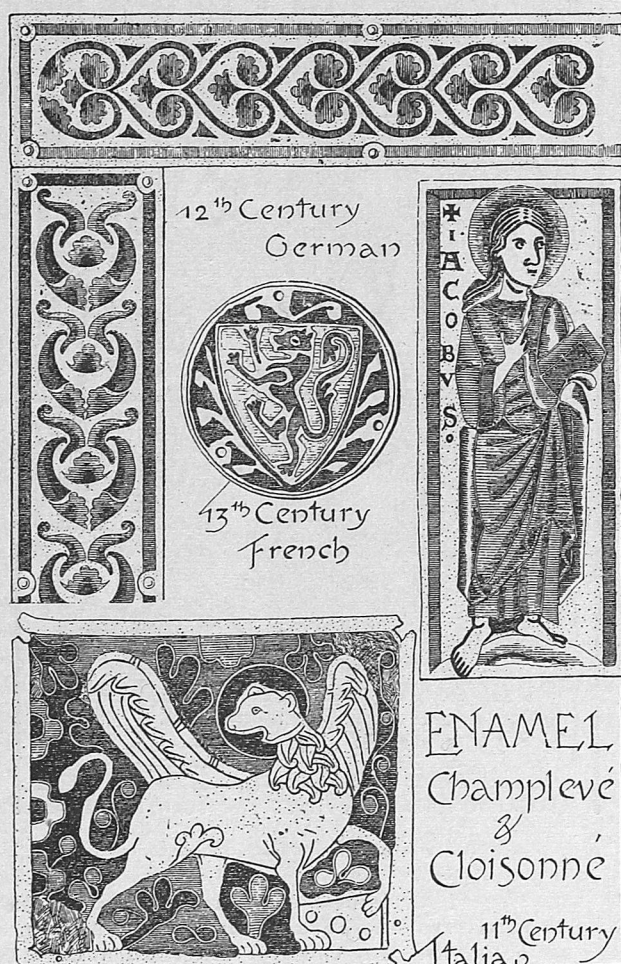


FIG. 37.—ENAMEL—Showing the Difference of Outline in Cloisonné and Champlevé.

37 combines the two processes. You can distinguish the solid metal from the wire-work quite plainly.

You find that when the laborious process of cutting out the ground is used, the artist adopts a larger treatment, and is altogether more chary of his lines, omitting them even, and blending one color into another. The method invites the use of broad spaces of plain metal, which in their turn tempt to engraving—although thereby there is a danger of disturbing too much the breadth and beauty of the polished surface, a danger successfully avoided by the artist of the twelfth century. (Fig. 37.)

In soldering on the flat wire, on the other hand, one is induced to elaborate a network of lines, such as we see in Chinese and Japanese enamel, too familiar to need illustration.

Thickness of outline is not unusually regulated by material. Another case in point is the leadwork by which a stained glass window is held together. Glazing being in richly colored glass, a necessity, the art of designing it consists partly in throwing the lead lines into the outlines (Fig. 38.) The leading of a mosaic window corresponds exactly to the *cloisons* of enamel just



FIG. 38.—STAINED GLASS—The Glazing Lines for the most part the Outlines.

as the pierced windows of Cairo may be compared to enlarged transparencies in *champlevé*.

In *appliqué* embroidery, again (Fig. 30), it is practically something of a necessity to mask the joints by an outline of gold or silken cord, very much to the enhancement of the general effect. In short there is every reason to follow the lead given us by the material. It does not do to play altogether from your own hand; the material is, so so speak, our partner in the game of decoration.

An artist will seldom resort of his own free will to an even and rigid outline all round every form. Excepting at a great distance from the eye (where its equality is not seen), that is almost certain to result in hardness. Mechanical precision is not seldom the manufacturer's ideal of finish. It is one, unfortunately, which he can all too easily realize—at a loss of what beauty of feeling and color, he can probably never be brought to know.

The instinct of art is rather to lose an outline, more or less, in places, and not to insist upon it unless its value is sufficient to justify the risk its use entails. The only rule which can be laid down as to the use of outline, is so extremely simple as not

altogether to satisfy the pedantic mind; if the need of an outline is apparent, then adopt it; but if not, if the effect is satisfactory without it, why on earth should one insist upon its use? For a reason—yes; but not otherwise.

The insistence upon outline for the sake of outline, as though decoration were not decoration without this official stamp of



FIG. 39.—APPLIQUE EMBROIDERY—The Joints Masked by a Corded Line.

pedantry, this trade-mark of the decorating shop, is pure nonsense.

The truth is, outline is frequently just a matter of expediency and no more. And a very wise and fit expedient it is, if only in view of that process of reproduction which is admitted to be one of the necessities of modern decoration, and particularly of modern ornament.

The vaguer forms which depend so much upon the touch and feeling of the artist, do not lend themselves to this necessity of reproduction. An outline does. And if, in outlining his drawing, the designer cannot help in some degree hardening it, the evil is infinitely less than if more undefined and delicate forms had been left to the tender mercies of another.

Moreover there are cases in which some consolation awaits the man who has the courage to make his design such as the available mechanic can render. The hard outlines of stained glass are blurred by the spreading of the light as it shines through; the hard shapes drawn for the damask weaver are redeemed by the sheen of silk or linen,—and so on. In such cases the artist who has been equal to the emergency will often find again in the executed work something of the delicacy belonging to his original.

Even in autograph work, where the artist executes his own design, he still avails himself of a soft outline. Decorative art is a kind of shorthand. Its very existence seems to depend upon its being done with readiness, quickness and certainty—so that he who runs may read.

The art which only careful scrutiny reveals to us will, for the most part, fail to win appreciation. Whatever its merits, if it hide them, no wonder that men pass them by. Even poetry of the over subtle order is not popular; and decorative art is essentially a popular art.

The effectiveness so much to be desired in decorative art has to be obtained without many of the resources of which the painter is free to avail himself. It is not often that the ornamentist can indulge in extremes of light and shade, nor yet in very strong modeling. Under these circumstances an outline is invaluable in helping to detach a pattern from its background. It is not generally understood how effectually even a delicate outline will sometimes do this (Fig. 40).

In work placed at a great distance from the eye, outline is quite the simplest means of definition. The greater the distance off, and the less the contrast in tone and color between the design and its background, the more urgent something of the kind becomes.

For all that there is no law making outline compulsory, unless the artist feels the need of it. He may, if he please, detach his pattern from the ground by deepening the one, or lightening the other, or by doing both. That would, however, ordinarily be a much more laborious business. Besides it is only fair to assume that there was always some reason for the choice of tones adopted in the first instance; and it may be anything but desirable to modify them. So it happens that in many instances the expedient of an outline is most handy. It enables one deliberately and safely to adopt a scheme of color, which, but for it, would be altogether ineffective.

So far from invariably hardening or emphasizing form, outline may equally be used for the diametrically opposite purpose of softening the shapes, as may be seen on Fig. 41, where a small portion of the pattern is harsh by comparison with the part outlined. The softening effect of outline is exemplified also in the embroidery on Fig. 39.

The use of outline must not be taken as a justification of its abuse. To accept the dogma of its saving merit and submit to its tyranny, is sheer foolishness. Art may quite well be decorative in which the outline is not emphasized; nor does the insistence upon it make design decorative, however effectually it may remove it from the pictorial.

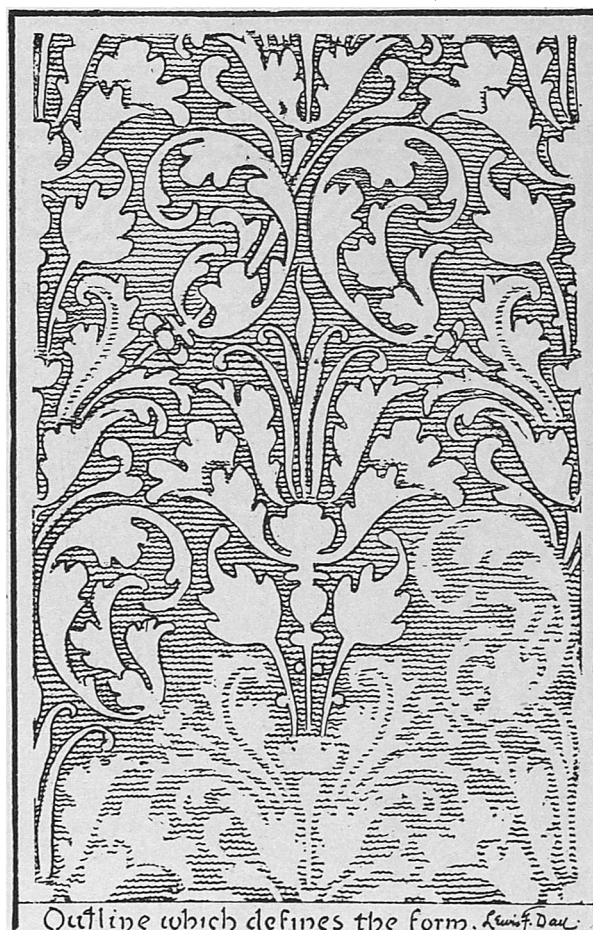


FIG. 40.—OUTLINE—Defining the Forms.

So with regard to flatness, symmetry and other qualities supposed to pertain to decorative treatment,—one must in every instance use one's wits. Any effect of relief which disturbs the sense of flatness in a surface characteristically flat is plainly out of place. Just so much of symmetry as may be needful to convey the sense of balance is to be desired—but no more.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

The fear of offending against the arbitrary laws of authority, often altogether "irresponsible," is a bogey which may scare some from trespassing on dangerous ground, but which certainly deters others from adventuring on fields of design in which they might perhaps discover the full use of their artistic faculty. What is called convention is not a hindrance to the workman,



FIG. 41.—OUTLINE—Softening the Forms.

but a help. If he finds it an impediment, he would do well to ask himself if that may not be his fault.

(To be continued.)

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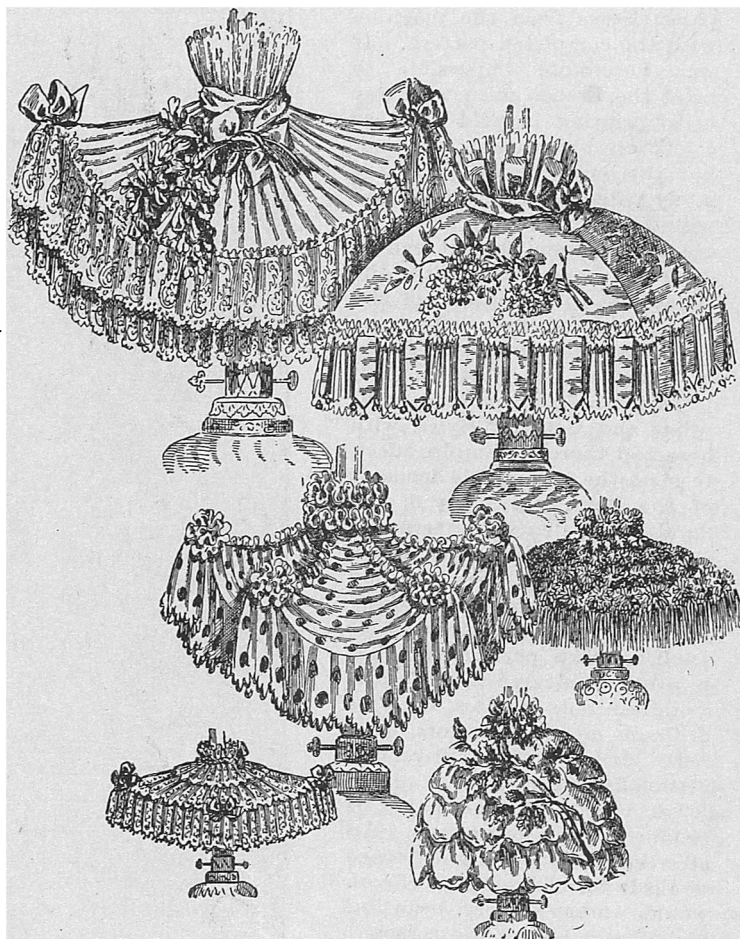
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SOME NOVEL LAMP SHADES.

SILK lamp shades of every description, fluted, gathered, with lace or plain, are still used. The fluted paper shades, which can be bought as low as ten or fifteen cents each, are also exceedingly effective in pale pink, yellow or red, tied over a white porcelain shade with a ribbon to match, and when finally scorched can be easily renewed. There are new frames for the Rochester lamps and other powerful burners that give out so much heat as to be in danger of scorching a shade mounted on an ordinary frame. These new frames are far from the lamp chimney at the top, so that there is a sufficient air space to prevent any danger of conflagration.

We present herewith several designs of novel lamp shades, which are quite fashionable at present. Fig. 1 is of pleated maize gauze, ornamented with white lace flounces over yellow gauze, bows and torsade in yellow ribbon, with sprays of laburnum. Fig. 2 has a dome-shaped wire frame, covered with pink gauze, embroidered with lilac, and edged with a gauze pleating,



Novel Lamp Shades.

striped with tabs in pink satin and a heading of lisle ruching. Fig. 3 is composed of draped cream silk gauze, spotted with red chenille; the gathers are arranged in a bouillonné on each rib, finished off with a cabbage bow. The flounce is buttonholed with red silk. Fig. 4 is a floral shade, composed of variegated chrysanthemums, edged with a fringe of floss silk. Fig. 5 is a flounced shade in white lace or embroidered chiffon, over mauve Persian silk, in keeping with the fly bows. Fig. 6 is a globe shape in gauze or crape, cut out in imitation of a full blown rose with sprays of buds in the center.

TURKISH, or Bulgarian embroidery is a new art work which is claiming much attention. Table covers, portieres and draperies are gorgeous, with a part of the design done in heavy raised "dival" stitch. Shoulder shawls of heavy crepe de chine are wrought in charming colors. Other stitches are the Souzani, Tsmidt and Armenian. Beautiful doyleys are shown in Yassay work, where all the work is done on counted threads. Solid gold embroidered ones finished with real lace, cost \$13 per dozen.